An Exploration of Intrusive Mobile Phone Behavior

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INTRODUCTION

Intrusive mobile phone behavior is behavior that intrudes into an individual's life using a mobile phone or similar device. As previous research has not always made the distinction between mobile devices or the internet on other devices, the terms intrusions, online harassment and cyberstalking will be used simultaneously.

Overview

New technologies that aid communication have emerged and been integrated into our lives throughout the last century and the uptake of new developments is happening at an accelerating pace. The first leap in communication capability was the home telephone which reached 50 million users in 75 years, followed by radio broadcasters reaching 50 million homes in 38 years. To reach the same size of audience it took television 13 years, the Internet achieved this landmark in just four. Not only is technology uptake increasing, but so has the realisation that information and communications products and services which can be used as mobile phone applications have more rapid impact. In 9 years 'AOL' clocked up its millionth user, 'Facebook' reached that threshold in only 9 months. The nature of the rapid saturation of markets received much public attention when 'Angry Bird Space edition' achieved 50 million users in 35 days.

A recent report by the UN's International Telecommunication Union (ITU) stated that in 2013, there were over 2.7 billion people using the Internet, representing approximately 39% of the world's population. Furthermore, an increasing proportion of this internet connectivity is being delivered through mobile devices as we see the proliferation of faster and cheaper, interconnected devices. The ITU study found that mobile-broadband subscriptions increased from 268 million in 2007 to 2.1 billion in 2013. This suggests an average annual growth rate of 40%. Moreover, there are currently almost as many mobile devices in the world as people; they estimated that by 2014 that there will be more mobile devices than people with subscriptions set to pass the 7 billion mark. The necessity of understanding how our behaviour might be mediated by the use of mobile devices has never been more important.

Current Scientific Knowledge in Intrusive Behaviours

There are a number of key authors who together have advanced our knowledge in this area. Dr Emma Olgivie (2000) at the Australian Institute of Criminology and Paul Bocji (2002, 2003) at the Aston Business School in the UK were amongst the first researchers to investigate this area. Leading experts in the field are currently Professor Brian Spitzberg and associates at San Diego State University (2002, 2007), Professor John Suler at

Rider University (2004) and Dr Lorraine Sheridan (2007) at Curtin University, Western Australia who is an international expert on stalking.

MOBILE PHONE USE

Technological advances, changing tariffs and cultural and individual differences have influenced the way that we use mobile phones. Mobile phones have traditionally been used as an instant means of communicating verbally or through texting (Short Message Service, SMS) with another person who may be distanced by either location or time (Green, 2002). Madell and Muncer (2007) identified that one benefit of texting, e-mailing, and instant messaging is that any of them can be used asynchronously as well as synchronously in contrast to face-to-face communication and phone conversations, which can only be synchronous. Texting gives individuals an opportunity to take time to think and consider the response that they want to give, generally without interruption. This feature of messaging has been seen to offer users a perception of increased control over their social interactions compared to communication in a spontaneous conversation (Levine, 2000; Madell &Muncer, 2007).

Individual differences have been associated with particular mobile phone behaviors. Socially anxious, shy, and introverted people, as well as neurotic individuals, have been reported to be more likely to use texting as the preferred alternative to talking on a mobile phone (Reid & Reid, 2004). Whereas, high levels of extraversion and low levels of self-esteem have been found to be significant predictors of problem mobile phones use, which the authors suggested may be attributed to behavioral addiction (Bianchi & Phillips, 2005). Sending and receiving texts also acts as a social and emotional pick-me-up, to remind both parties that someone is thinking of them. This has been found to be particularly salient for couples in a romantic relationship, where texting may provide a medium of being connected to someone when

other forms of communication are inappropriate or unavailable (Pettigrew, 2007). The increased accessibility to others that texting provides also has the potential of removing social barriers that may serve a protective function.

INTERNET USE

As previously stated the very nature of mobile devices is evolving with smart phones having multiple communication functions including being able to access the internet (Bjorklund, Rehling, Tompkins, & Strom, 2012; Ipsos MORI, 2013). Therefore, research that was once targeted towards gaining an understanding of internet behaviours on home computers is now relevant to our understanding of behaviours mediated by mobile devices. Indeed, the difference between home and mobile devices is now so blurred that contemporary researchers do not always make a distinction of where the internet is being accessed.

The frequency and type of internet use has been identified as being dependent the age of users. In the UK 16-24 year olds are the highest users of leisure or recreation activities, with 93% of this age group using social networking sites. Those aged 25-34 years old are the second highest users of such activities, with 89% of this age group using the internet for emails (Office for National Statistics, 2013). Older adults also engage in online leisure or recreation activities with 50% of 45-54 year olds reporting that they use online social networks. These figures reflect those reported in the US, where internet and smart phone use in 2012 are reported separately but no statistically significance has been found between the two sources of communication (United States Census Bureau, 2013). However, it was observed that younger people use smart phones more than older age groups (United States Census Bureau, 2013).

Clearly the advances and growth in information and communications technology present positive opportunities. However, these advances

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